

QA44 - Honey in Infant's Food

QUESTION:

Can the honey in graham crackers cause infant botulism? I have read in some sources that the honey in the crackers is specially treated so it will not have botulinum spores in it. I have read in other sources to only give graham crackers that are not made with honey (these don't seem to exist where I live). Can you help me out here?

ANSWER:

Following an extensive search and review of available literature on botulism and honey (including the American Academy of Pediatrics) it is clear that most resources choose not to distinguish between safe and unsafe foods containing honey but rather give a blanket recommendation for children under 12 months to avoid honey and processed foods containing honey.

One credible resource, the National Food Safety Department under the USDA further specifies that *Clostridium botulinum* "spores can be inactivated when manufactured food products (such as cereals or nuts) receives roasting heat treatment. Graham crackers or cereal for example would not contain any viable microbial spores."

This article provides complete and detailed information with regard to botulism as it relates to food and other environmental sources, as well as infant risk factors and food processing that can and cannot inactivate the spore-causing botulism. More information and specific references can be found at www.foodsafety.org/consumer/nut/nu022.htm